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ABSTRACT

This report highlights findings from the fourth National Survey of Working America conducted for the National Career Development Association. The survey gathered information through interviews with a national sample of 1,003 adults, 18 years of age or older, representing a total population of 185.2 million adults, in summer 1999. The study examined adults' attitudes and experiences related to work and the selection of a career or job, including the use of technology, particularly the Internet, for disseminating career and job information; the increased demand for training and certification; and the effects of globalization on individual careers. Key findings of the survey were the following: (1) a "career information digital divide" may be emerging, as more Americans use the Internet to find help in locating a job and people without computer skills and Internet access may be at a disadvantage in pursuing job and career opportunities; (2) adults in the U.S. express a need for career assistance; (3) job change is viewed by many as a positive experience; (4) adults appreciate the need for lifelong learning; and (5) adults are not clear on the effects of globalization on their job. (KC)

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CAREER CONNECTING IN A CHANGING CONTEXT: A SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS OF THE 1999 NATIONAL SURVEY OF WORKING AMERICA

A White Paper for National, State and Local Policy Makers Presenting the Survey Results and Policy Questions Raised by These Results

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PREFACE

The purpose of this white paper, *Career Connecting in a Changing Context: A Summary of the Key Findings of the 1999 National Survey of Working America*, is to provide national, state and local policy makers, as well as career program staff, with an overview of the most interesting findings, a brief summary of the findings for each survey item, and a list of policy questions that are raised by these data.

This report highlights findings from the fourth National Survey of Working America conducted by The Gallup Organization for the National Career Development Association (NCDA) with funding from the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC). The first survey was completed in 1987 in conjunction with the National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE). The second survey was conducted in 1989 in conjunction with NOICC and emphasized the career needs of minority groups. The third survey, completed in 1993, focused on displaced workers and the transition of young adults from school to work. The results of these surveys have been used by national, state and local policy makers as well as practitioners to understand the career development needs of adults, the sources of career assistance available to them, and the perceived usefulness of these sources.

The fourth National Survey of Working America focused on many of the questions that had been asked in the previous three surveys. In addition, new items were added to seek information about emerging career trends such as use of technology, particularly the Internet, for disseminating career and job information; the increased demand for training and certification; and the effects of globalization on individual careers.

The following areas were explored:

?? Current employment status

?? The need for help in the last year with selecting or getting a job

?? Sources of help and information in selecting, changing, or getting a job

?? Evaluation of availability and usefulness of information

?? Use of job or career counseling

?? Perceived need for more job training or education

?? Future employment outlook

?? Satisfaction with current job and reasons for leaving a job

?? How adults get started in a job or career

?? On-the-job assistance from employers

?? Experience of conflict between job and home

?? Perception of discrimination in workplaces

?? Perception of globalization

The survey, conducted by The Gallup Organization for NCDA and NOICC, provides information for career development program planning. The survey is designed to be representative of the adult population living in households that have telephones in the continental United States. The following report is based on the findings of a national survey of 1,003 adults, 18 years of age or older. The sample represents a total population of 185.2 million adults, based on the U.S. Census current population reports. The study examined adults' attitudes and experience related to work and the selection of a career or job. Interviews were conducted from June 19 to July 24, 1999. The sampling error for all adults is plus or minus three percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence.

The complete survey report developed by The Gallup Organization and titled, *National Survey of Working America,* is available on the website of the National Career Development Association at www.ncda.org. The report presents results for specific groups including employment status (employed full-time, employed part-time, or not employed); occupation (professional/business, clerical/sales, or blue collar); gender (male or female); age (18-25, 26-40,41-55, 56-65, or over 65); race (Black, white, or all others) and education (less than high school, high school grad, vocational/community college, some four-year college, or college grad).

The National Career Development Association is an association of approximately 4,500 career development professionals who work in education, business and industry, community and government agencies, and private practice. The mission of NCDA is to enhance the career development of all Americans across the life span.

The National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee is a Federal interagency committee that attends to the labor market information and career development needs of youth and adults. Established by Congress in 1976, its members include representatives of ten key agencies within the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education,

Commerce, Defense and Agriculture. These include the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics and Employment and Training Administration, and the Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

A number of experts in career development and training served on the Advisory Committee including: Morton Bahr, President, Communications Workers of America; Thelma Daley, Retired, Baltimore Public Schools; Ellen Fabian, Associate Professor, University of Maryland; Edwin L. Herr, Distinguished Professor, College of Education, Pennsylvania State University; Roberts T. Jones, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Alliance of Business; Juliette N. Lester, Executive Director, National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee; Jules Pagano,Vice President, American Income Life Insurance, Inc.; and Nancy, K. Schlossberg, President, National Career Development Association.

The survey was conducted under the direction of Harry E. Cotugno, Vice President, Gallup Organization. Project Directors for the National Career Development Association were Juliet V. Miller and Louise Vetter.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

Early Signs of a Career Information Digital Divide. According to the findings of a survey conducted by The Gallup Organization for the National Career Development Association (NCDA), a "career information digital divide" may be emerging. The survey indicates that 13 percent of adults in the labor force already see the Internet as a source of help or information. Of those who said they needed help in the past year with finding, selecting, or getting a job, 14 percent said they had used the Internet to find help and 28 percent to find information. As more Americans get online, people without computer skills and Internet access could be at a disadvantage in pursuing job and career opportunities.

Seen in the light of other data on a growing "digital divide" in the United States, this could mean that Americans who have limited incomes and lower levels of education, as well as members of some minority groups, will have less access to job and career information. In this Gallup survey, for example, 23 percent of college graduates

indicated they would use the Internet, compared to just 7 percent of those who had finished only high school.

"All Americans, and especially all young Americans, must have equal access to career information and have the skills to understand and use it, whether it's in a book or on a website," says Juliette N. Lester, Executive Director of NOICC. Noting that the Internet is still only one among many sources of career help, she pointed out that "human networks continue to be a more common resource, mentioned by 35 percent of adults."

As more career information is available through media sources, particularly the Internet, having access to these sources could become very important to career success. Is there a "digital divide" that makes career information via the Internet more accessible to some than others? The survey shows that use of the Internet for career information differs among groups. Twenty-three percent of those age 18-25, 17 percent of those age 26-40, 11 percent of those age 41-55 and only 2 percent of those age 56-65 indicated that they would use the Internet for career information

Roberts T. Jones, President and CEO, National Alliance of Business, says, "Low-skilled jobs are disappearing. People with less education are less apt to use media sources of career information or to seek assistance from professional career providers. This leads to a 'career digital divide' where those who most need information have the least access. In turn, those in most need will lack information and become more disadvantaged."

Adults in the United States Express Need for Career Assistance. Adults of all ages living in the United States say that they need assistance with career planning. One in ten adults in the labor force (9%) reports needing help, during the past year, in making career plans or in selecting, changing or getting a job. Young adults, particularly those in the 18-25 age group, are more likely than older adults to report needing help in the job market. In addition, non-Whites are more likely than Whites to report that they needed help in the past year.

A higher percentage of youth ages 18-25 (16%) and racial minority group members of all ages including African American/Black (16%) and other non-White group members (13%) have needed help during the past year in making career plans or in selecting, changing, or getting a job. When asked whether they had visited a counselor or

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other career specialist regarding career choices, only 11 percent of those with less than high school education and 13 percent of high school graduates answered "yes" as compared to 31 percent of vocational and community college grads and 29 percent of college grads.

"These data point to an unevenness of exposure to career information," says Edwin L. Herr, Distinguished Professor, College of Education, Pennsylvania State University.

"We need to identify those who are falling through the cracks," says Nancy K. Schlossberg, Professor Emerita, University of Maryland and President of the National Career Development Association. "Everyone needs assistance in developing an individual career development plan."

Many adults, regardless of age, state that they would try to get more information if they were starting over again. Seven in ten adults (69%) report, if they were starting over, they would try to get more information about the job and career options open to them than they got the first time. Young adults are somewhat more likely than older adults to say they would try to get more information. In addition, those with less than a four-year college degree are more likely than college graduates to say they would try to get more information.

When asked to whom they would go to for help in selecting, changing or getting a job, 35 percent indicated family, friends, neighbors, associates or relatives; 39 percent indicated some type of counselors (human resources, career, employment, etc.); and 43 percent indicated other sources. Respondents said they would use media: newspapers (29%) and career Internet sites (13%). Those who needed help in the past year are not very different from those who did not need help.

Job Change Is Viewed by Many as a Positive Experience. Is job change seen as positive or negative? Most employed adults (61%) expect to stay at their current job over the next three years. Another 17 percent expect to change jobs voluntarily. Most employed adults report they like their jobs very much (50%) or quite a bit (31%). Few (5%) express little or no liking for their current job, and one in eight (13%) say they like their job "a little bit." Older adults tend to be happier than young adults with their current

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job. Furthermore, full-time employees are more likely than part-time workers to like their jobs "very much."

As Roberts T. Jones indicates, "The labor market is currently very stable, which might be counter to what the public believes. Those career transitions that are made are often voluntary and are positive for the individual making them."

Adults Appreciate the Need for Lifelong Learning. The changing nature of the workplace requires lifelong learning. The survey tested adults' understanding of this need, and the extent to which employers are helping to meet this need. About 70 percent of the employed adults report that they received some type of career assistance from their employer. Among all employed adults, 32 percent report getting training to improve job skills. About one in four get yearly evaluations (23%) or training to help them advance (21%).

Most adults (53%) say they will need more training or education to maintain or increase their earning power. Young adults, eighteen to twenty-five years of age, are more likely than older adults to feel they will need more training or education. Asked where they would get this training one in four say from a four-year college (26%). About one in five (19%) would get additional training through courses or programs provided by their employer. Also mentioned are courses at a community college (18%) or business, technical or trade schools (15%).

Adults Are Not Clear on the Effects of Globalization on Their Job. The survey asked adults about the effects of the globalization of economic and labor markets on their individual careers. Recent protest marches have stressed the growing awareness by workers both in the United States and in other countries of these effects. Thirty-eight percent said that they didn't believe that globalization would affect their job, 18 percent said it would change the way they do their job, 18 percent said it would cause them to learn new skills, 18 percent said that it would result in fewer jobs in the United States, and 7 percent said that it would cause them to need retraining.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Need for Career Help. One in ten adults in the labor force (9%) reported needing help, in the past year, in making career plans or in selecting, changing or getting a job. Young adults, particularly those eighteen to twenty-five years of age, are more likely than older adults to report needing help in the job market. In addition, non-Whites are more likely than Whites to report they needed help in the past year.

Desire for More Information, If Starting Over. Seven in ten adults (69%) report, if they were starting over, they would try to get more information about the job and career options open to them than they got the first time. Young adults are somewhat more likely than older adults to say they would try to get more information. In addition, those with less than a four-year college degree are more likely than college graduates to say they would try to get more information.

Most Likely Sources of Career Help. Asked to whom they would go for help in selecting, changing or getting a job, both those adults who needed help in the past and those who responded in terms of the sources of help they would use if needed, would use the same sources. Most frequently mentioned, by adults in the labor force, as sources of help in locating employment, are friends or relatives (42%).

Almost as many (39%) would go to some type of career counselor. Many adults used the print media and television (42%), some time in the past, to get information about jobs and careers. About one in six (16%) used a career information center in a college. The public library and Internet are each used by about one in eight. A third (35%) report using friends, relatives or associates.

Usefulness of Career Information. Those who said information sources are available were asked to evaluate their usefulness. Opinion is divided between 44 percent who say available information is adequate and 47 percent who say it should be improved.

One in five adults (21%) report visiting a counselor or other career specialist to learn about possible career choices. Among adults eighteen to twenty-five years of age, 30 percent have visited a counselor for career information. A third (30%) saw a counselor at a college or university. One in eight (13%) saw a high school counselor, and 11 percent saw a counselor at a community college. Approximately one in ten adults (11%) report visiting a professional career counselor in a private practice. A majority who received assistance

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report it was helpful. Thirty-six percent said the counselor was very helpful, and 47 percent somewhat helpful.

Method of Choosing Job or Career. Many employed adults report they started in their job or career through a conscious choice and plan (41%). Relatives (10%) or friends (18%) were also influential. Deliberate planning is more characteristic of those with a college education than those with fewer years of education.

Future Employment Outlook. Most employed adults (61%) expect to stay at their current job over the next three years. Another 17 percent expect to change jobs voluntarily

Satisfaction with Current Job. Most employed adults report they like their job very much (50%) or quite a bit (31%). Few (5%) express little or no liking for their current job, and an additional one in eight (13%) say they like their job "a little bit." Older adults tend to be happier than young adults with their current job. Furthermore, full-time employees are more likely than part-time workers to like their jobs "very much."

Adults' Reasons for Leaving Jobs. Everyone who ever held a job w. as asked why they left the last job they held. Approximately six in ten (60%) said they quit their last job.

Assistance That Workers Receive from Their Employer. About seven in ten of the employed adults reported receiving some type of career assistance from their employer. Among all employed adults, 32 percent report getting training to improve job skills. About one in four get yearly evaluations (23%) or training to help them advance (21%).

Adults' Perceptions of Need for Further Education. Most adults (53%) say they will need more training or education to maintain or increase their earning power. Young adults, eighteen to twenty-five years of age, are more likely than older adults to feel they will need more training or education. Asked where they would get the training they needed, one in four say from a four-year college (26%). About one in five (19%) would get additional training through courses or programs provided by their employer. Also mentioned are courses at a community college (18%) or business, technical or trade school (15%).

Extent of Conflict Between Demands of Job and Home. While most employed adults report little or no conflict between the demands of work and home, 11 percent say they experience a great deal of conflict. Another 18 percent say they experience quite a lot of conflict.

Perceptions of Discrimination in the Workplace. Asked about discrimination in the workplace, most employed adults (73%) said they do not believe it exists at their place of work. Slightly less than one in ten (8%) feel both women and minorities are discriminated against. An additional four percent report women, but not minorities, experience discrimination, and two percent say minorities only experience discrimination. Seven percent believe reverse discrimination exists.

Perceptions of Effects of Globalization on Their Job. Four in ten (38%) employed adults do not believe globalization will affect their job. One in five (18%) believes it will change the way they do their job, while as many (18%) say it will cause them to learn new skills. One in five (18%) believes U.S. jobs will be lost.

POLICY QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE SURVEY

1. How can we remedy the uneven availability and use of career information and assistance where minority group members and adults with lower educational levels report higher need for career assistance but lower use of both human and Internet sources of assistance?
2. As the Internet and other technology provide increased access to career information, what "value added" assistance can career development professionals provide?
3. How can we help workers understand the probable impacts of globalization on individual careers and prepare in advance to respond to these effects?
4. How can we help workers understand the current shifts in the nature of employer demands for training including the importance of demonstrated competence, certification of skills, and new institutions and technologies for delivering training?
5. How can the changing structure of work and jobs in the United States be communicated in meaningful ways to help individuals navigate their careers?

6. How can formal sources of career assistance be integrated with the trend toward taking individual responsibility, use of informal networks, and preference for using technology-based career information?
7. What early career interventions are most helpful in reducing career floundering in young adults or in making these experiences more positive?
8. What strategies will reduce the "career information digital divide" and guarantee equal access to career information for all U.S. workers?
9. How can technology be integrated into current career assistance programs and services?
10. How can we ensure that career transitions have positive rather than negative effects on individuals?